



# HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN AMERICA

Peter Wiernik



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**From the Period of the Discovery of the New  
World to the 20th Century**

e-artnow, 2021

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EAN: 4064066389130

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# PREFACE.

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There were less than ten thousand Jews in the New World three centuries after its discovery, and about two-thirds of them lived in the West Indies and in Surinam or Dutch Guiana in South America. While the communities in those far-away places are now larger in membership than they were at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, their comparative importance is much diminished. The two or three thousand Jews who lived in North America or in the United States one hundred years ago have, on the other hand, increased to nearly as many millions, the bulk of them having come in the last three or four decades. On this account neither our conditions nor our problems can be thoroughly understood without the consideration of the actual present. The plan of other works of this kind, to devote only a short concluding chapter to the present time, or to leave it altogether for the future historian, could therefore not be followed in this work. The story would be less than half told, if attention were not paid to contemporary history.

The chief aim of the work—the first of its kind in this complete form—being to reach the ordinary reader who is interested in Jewish matters in a general way, original investigations and learned disquisitions were avoided, and it was not deemed advisable to overburden the book with too many notes or to provide a bibliographical apparatus. The plan and scope of the work are self evident; it was inevitable that a disproportionately large part should be devoted to the United States. The continuity of Jewish history is made possible only by the preservation of our identity as a religious community; local history really begins with the

formation of a congregation. Each of the successive strata of immigration was originally represented by its own synagogues, and when the struggle to gain a foothold or to remove disabilities was over, communal activity was the only one which could properly be described as Jewish. Economic growth could have been entirely neglected, despite the present day tendency to consider every possible problem from the standpoint of economics. But the material well-being of the Jews of the earlier periods was an important factor in the preparation for the reception and easy absorption of the larger masses which came later, and this gives wealth a meaning which, in the hands of people who are less responsible for one another than Jews, it does not possess. The Marrano of the Seventeenth or the Eighteenth Century who brought here riches far in excess of what he found among the inhabitants in the places where he settled, would probably not have been admitted if he came as a poor immigrant, and his merit as a pioneer of trade and industry interests us because he assisted to make this country a place where hosts of men can come and find work to do. Without this only a small number could enjoy the liberty and equality which an enlightened republic vouchsafes to every newcomer without distinction of race or creed.

Still these absorbingly interesting early periods had to be passed over briefly, despite the wealth of available material, to keep within the bounds of a single volume, and to be able to carry out the plan of including in the narrative a comprehensive view of the near past and the present. While no excuse is necessary for making the latter part of the work longer than the earlier, though in most works the inequality is the other way, the author regrets the scarcity of available sources for the history of the Jewish immigration from Slavic countries other than Russia. There were times when German Jewish historians were reproached with neglecting the Jews of Russia. In those times there was a



scarcity of necessary "*Vorarbeiten*" or preparation of material for the history of the Jews of that Empire. To-day, as far as the history of the Jewish immigrant in America is concerned, the scarcity is still greater as far as it concerns the Jews who came from Austria and Roumania.

The principal sources which were utilized in the preparation of this work are: *The Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (20 vols., 1893-1911), which are referred to as "Publications"; *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk and Wagnalls, 12 vols., 1901-6); *The Settlement of the Jews in North America*, by Judge Charles P. Daly, edited by Max J. Kohler (New York, 1893), often referred to as "Daly"; *The Hebrews in America*, by Isaac Markens (New York, 1888); *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*, by the Hon. Simon Wolf, edited by Louis Edward Levy (Philadelphia, 1895). Other works, like Dr. Kayserling's *Christopher Columbus*, Mr. Pierce Butler's *Judah P. Benjamin* (of the American Crisis Biographies, Philadelphia, 1906) and the Rev. Henry S. Morais' *Jews of Philadelphia*, were also drawn upon for much valuable material which they made accessible. All of these works were used to a larger extent than is indicated by the references or foot-notes, and my indebtedness to them is herewith gratefully acknowledged.

Where biographical dates are given after the name of a person born in a foreign country, the date of arrival in the New World is often fully as important as that of birth or death. This date is indicated in the text by an *a.*, which stands for *arrived*, as *b.* stands for *born* and *d.* for *died*.

In conclusion I gladly record my obligation to Mr. Abraham S. Freidus of the New York Public Library for aid in the gathering of material; to Mr. Isaiah Gamble for re-reading of the proofs; to Mr. Samuel Vaisberg for seeing the work through the press, and to my sister, Bertha Wiernik, for assistance in the preparation of the index.

*P. W., New York, July, 1912.*

# INTRODUCTION.

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## **THE JEWS AS EARLY INTERNATIONAL TRADERS.**

The ten centuries which passed between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the discovery of the New World are commonly known as the Middle Ages or the Dark Ages. They were, on the whole, very dark indeed for most of the inhabitants of Europe, as well as for the Jews who were scattered among them. It was a time of the fermentation of religious and national ideas, a formative period for the mind and the body politic of the races from which the great nations of the present civilized world were evolved. It was a period of violent hatreds, of cruel persecutions, of that terrible earnestness which prompts and justifies the extermination of enemies and even of opponents; there was almost constant war between nations, between classes, between creeds and sects. The ordinary man had no rights even in theory, the truths "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" were not self-evident then; they were not even thought of until a much later era.

The treatment accorded to the Jews in our own times in the countries where the general conditions are nearest to those prevailing in the dark ages, gives a clear idea of what the Jew had to undergo when the average degree of culture was so much lower than it is in the least developed of the Christian countries at present. The records of the times are so filled with pillage, expulsions and massacres, that they

impress us as having been common occurrences, though they happened further apart to those who lived through the peaceful intervals which distance of time makes to appear short to us. There were, of course, some bright spots, the most shining of which was the Iberian peninsula during the earlier part of the Moorish domination. Sometimes a kind-hearted king would afford his Jews protection and even grant them valuable privileges; a clear-headed prince often found it to his own interest to utilize them for the advancement of the commerce of his dominion, and in a rare period of peace and prosperity there also happened a general relaxation of the severity which characterized the time. But if we view the entire thousand years as a single historical period, we find the condition of the Jews slowly deteriorating; with the result that while the modern nations were welded together and came out of the medieval furnace strengthened and developed, the Jews were pushed back, segregated and degraded, ready for the numerous expulsions and various sufferings which continued for more than two centuries in Western Europe and are not yet over in other parts of the Old World.

The favorable position of the Jews at the beginning of the Middle Ages is less familiar to the reading public, even to the Jewish reader, than the troublesome times which came later. As a matter of fact the Jews were, except for the lack of national unity and of the possession of an independent home, better situated materially four centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple than before the last dissolution of the Kingdom of Judah. The instinct for commerce which is latent in the "Semitic" race was awakened in the Diaspora and, after an interruption of more than a thousand years, we find, at the end of the classical times, international trade again almost exclusively in the hands of members of that race. The Sumero-Accadians or original Babylonians who were the earliest known international traders on land, and the Phoenicians, who first

dared to trade over seas, were of Semitic origin. As foreign commerce is the highest form of activity in regard to the utilization of human productivity, so it is also the forerunner of mental activity and of the spread of an ennobling and instructive culture. The beginnings of both Egyptian and Greek civilization, according to the latest discoveries, point unmistakably to Mesopotamian or Phoenician origin, with a strong probability that the latter received it from the former in times which we usually describe as pre-historic, but about which we now possess considerable exact information. Culture followed the great route of the caravans to Syria and Egypt on one side, to Iran, India and as far as China in an opposite direction. And if we accept the wholly incorrect and un-scientific division of the white race into Aryans and Semites, then this original and most fertile of the cultures of humanity was undoubtedly Semitic. A more modern and more nearly correct division would place these ancient inhabitants of the plateau of Asia as a part of the great Mediterranean or brunette race, which includes, besides all the so-called Semites, a number of European nations which are classed as Aryans. Greece succeeded Phœnicia and was in turn succeeded by Rome in the hegemony of international trade as well as in that of general culture. Both commerce and culture declined when the ancient civilization was all but destroyed by the invasion of the blond barbarians of the northern forests, who were themselves destined to attain in a far-away future the highest form of civilization of which mankind has hitherto proven itself capable. (See *Zollschan* "Das Rassenproblem," Vienna, 1910, pp. 206 ff.)

It so happened that at the time of the downfall of the Roman Empire, or, as it is usually called, the beginning of the Middle Ages, another people of Semitic origin, the Jews, were for the most part engaged in international trade. There are records of Jewish merchants of that period shipping or exporting wine, oil, honey, fish, cattle, woolens, etc., from Spain to Rome and other Latin provinces, from Media to



Brittannia, from the Persian Gulf and Ethiopia to Macedonia and Italy; there was no important seaport or commercial center in which the Jews did not occupy a commanding position. Their prominence as importers and exporters rather increased than diminished by the downfall of the great Empire. The new nations of the Germanic kingdoms which were founded on the ruins of Rome, knew nothing of international trade, and the position of the Jews as merchants was accepted by them as a matter of course. Hence the first traces of Jewish settlements in modern European countries are almost exclusively to be found in the earliest records of commerce and of trading privileges. They are then known as traders with distant countries, as sea-going men, as owners of vessels and as slave-traders. The commercial note or written obligation to pay, which is accepted in lieu of payment and is itself negotiable as a substitute for money, is a Jewish invention of those times. They developed industries and improved the material conditions of every place in which they were found in large numbers. As late as 1084, when their position had been already much weakened and the coming Crusades were casting their shadows, Bishop Rudiger of Speyer began his edict of privileges granted to the Jews with the statement: "As I wish to turn the village of Speyer into a city ... I call the Jews to settle there." (See *ibid.* p. 351.)<sup>1</sup>

## **THE SPANISH JEWS AS LAND OWNERS.**

Canon Law on one side and the rise of cities on the other shattered the position of the Jews until they were reduced to sore straits at the end of the Middle Ages. The church labored persistently and relentlessly through the centuries in which Europe was thoroughly Christianized, to separate the Jews as far as possible from their Gentile neighbors. The ties which united the two parts of the population by a

thousand threads of mutual interest, friendship, co-operation and beneficial intercourse, were slowly loosened and, where possible, all but severed. At the various Church Councils, from Nicea to the last Lateran, there was laid down the theory of the necessity to force the Jews out of the national life of the countries in which they dwelt, and to segregate them as a distinct, inferior and outlawed class. The principles enunciated by the higher clergy were disseminated by the priests and the demagogues among the masses. Special laws and restrictions were often followed by attacks, sacking of the Jewish quarters and degradations of various kinds. In the twelfth and the following three centuries the ill-treatment was often followed by expulsions and cancellation of debts, while heavy fines on individual Jews or on entire communities were accepted on both sides as a lesser evil or as easy terms for escaping greater hardships. The climax of this method of dealing with the Jews, the greatest blow administered to the unhappy Children of Israel by Christian princes, was the expulsion from Spain in 1492, and its concomitant, the expulsion from Portugal five years afterwards.

But the Church alone could never have accomplished the ruin of the Jews if the changing economic conditions and the rise of a large and powerful class of Christian merchants did not help to undermine the position of the erstwhile solitary trading class. The burgher classes were the chief opponents and persecutors of their Jewish competitors: they seconded, and in many cases instigated, the efforts of the clergy to exclude the Jews from many occupations. So when the city overpowered the land owner and began to exert a preponderant influence on the government, the cause of the Jew was lost, or at least postponed until a more humane and liberal time, when the ordinary claims of the brotherhood of man were to overcome the narrow-minded mercantile and ecclesiastical policies of a ruder age. The great historian

Ranke pointed out that the struggle between the cities and the nobility in Castille was decided in favor of the former by the marriage of Queen Isabella to Ferdinand of Aragon. It was also this marriage which sealed the doom of the Spanish Jews, as well as that of their former friends and protectors, the Moors, who had by that time sunk so low, that it was impossible for them to keep their last stronghold in Europe much longer.

Though the outlook in Spain was very dark, it was much worse in all other known countries, which accounts for the fact that there was hardly any emigration from the Christian parts of Spain in the time immediately preceding the expulsion. The Spanish Jew was then, and has to some extent remained even unto this day, the aristocrat among the Jews of the world. His intense love for that country is still smouldering in the hearts of his descendants, and not without reason. In other European countries the Jew could, during the middle ages, only enjoy the sympathy and sometimes be accorded the protection of the nobility. In Spain and Portugal he actually belonged to that class. For, as Selig (Dr. Paulus) Cassel has justly remarked (in his splendid article *Juden* in Ersch and Gruber's Encyclopædia) sufficient attention has not been paid by Jewish historians to the important fact that Spain and Portugal were the only considerable countries during the Middle Ages in which the Jews were permitted to own land. The statement, for which there is an apparent Jewish authority, that they owned about a third of Spain at the time of their exile, is doubtless an exaggeration, but there can be no question of their being extensive holders of land-properties.

This largely explains why the Jew in Spain has not sunk in public estimation as much as he did in other countries, why his fate was different, and, in the end, worse than that of his more humiliated and degraded brother elsewhere. When the German or French Jew was forced out of commerce he could only become a money-lender at the usurious rates

prevailing in those times. This vocation drew on him the contempt and hatred of all classes, as was always the case and as is the case in many places even to-day. But while the usurer was despised he was very useful, often even indispensable, especially in those times when there was a great scarcity of the precious metals and of convertible capital. This may explain why the exiled Jews were in other countries usually called back to the places from which they were exiled. The prejudice of the age may render their work disreputable, but it was none the less necessary; they were missed as soon as they left, and on many occasions negotiations for their return were begun as soon as the popular fury cooled down, or when the object of spoliation was attained.

Not so in Spain. The Jewish merchant who could no longer hold his own against his stronger non-Jewish competitor, could do what is often done by others who voluntarily retire from such pursuits, i. e., invest his capital in landed estates. We can imagine that the transition did not at all seem to be forced, that those who caused it, and even its victims, might have considered it as the natural course of events. After the great massacres of 1391, a century before the expulsion, many Jews emigrated to Moorish North Africa, where there still remained some degree of tolerance and friendliness for them, mingled perhaps with some hope of re-conquering the lost parts of the Iberian peninsula. But later there was less thought of migration, least of all of emigrating to the parts of Spain which still remained in the possession of the Moors. The race which was, seven centuries before, assisted by the Jews to become masters of Iberia, and which together with them rose to a height of culture and mental achievement which is not yet properly appreciated in modern history, has now become degenerate and almost savage in its fanaticism. The Jew of Spain was still proud, despite his sufferings. He could not see his fate as clearly as we can now from the perspective of five

hundred years. He was rooted in the country in which he lived for many centuries. He was, like most men of wealth and position, inclined to be optimistic, and he could not miss his only possible protection against expropriation or exile—the possession of full rights of citizenship—because the Jews nowhere had it in those times and had not had it since the days of ancient Rome.

The catastrophe of the great expulsion, which came more unexpectedly than we can now perceive, was possibly facilitated by the position which the Jews held as land owners. It certainly contributed to make the decree of exile irrevocable. The holder of real property is more easily and more thoroughly despoiled, because he cannot hide his most valuable possessions or escape with them. He is not missed when he is gone; his absence is hardly felt after the title to his lands has been transferred to the Crown or to favorites of the government. When the robbery is once committed only compunction or an awakened sense of justice could induce the restitution which re-admission or recall would imply. And as abstract moral forces had very little influence in those cruel days, it is no wonder that the expulsion was final—the only one of that nature in Christian Europe.

This peculiar position of the Jews in Spain and Portugal was also the cause of the immense number of conversions which gave these anti-Jewish nations a very large mixture of Jewish blood in their veins. The temptation to cling to the land and to the high social position which could not be enjoyed elsewhere was too strong for all but the strongest. Thus we find Marranos or secret Jews in all the higher walks of life in the times of the discovery of America. The more steadfast of their brethren who were equally prominent in the preceding period assisted in various ways earlier voyages of discovery, and even contributed indirectly to the success of the one great voyage, which did not begin until they were exiled from Spain forever.



But we must constantly bear in mind, when speaking of the Middle Ages and of the two centuries succeeding it, the sixteenth and the seventeenth, that the Jews did not possess the right of citizenship and were not, even when they were treated very well, considered as an integral part of the population. This was the chief weakness of their position and the ultimate cause of all the persecutions, massacres and expulsions. Still they had many opportunities and made the most of them to advance their own interests and those of the countries in which they dwelt. We find them in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in close touch with the current of national life in the countries which were most absorbed in enterprises of navigation and discovery. Many of them were still great merchants, numerous others were scholars, mathematicians and astronomers or astrologers; some had influence in political life as advisers or fiscal officials at the royal courts. They accomplished much, as Jews and as Marranos, even when the danger of persecution must have been ever-present, or later, when in constant terror of the Inquisition. Many of them could therefore participate in the work which led to the discovery of a New World, where their descendants were destined to find a home safer and more free than was ever dreamt of in medieval Jewish philosophy.

# **PART I.**

## **THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE PERIOD.**

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# **CHAPTER I. THE PARTICIPATION OF JEWS IN THE DISCOVERY OF THE NEW WORLD.**

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The Jew of Barcelona who has navigated the whole known world—Judah Cresques, “the Map Jew,” as director of the Academy of Navigation which was founded by Prince Henry the Navigator—One Jewish astronomer advises the King of Portugal to reject the plans of Columbus—Zacuto as one of the first influential men in Spain to encourage the discoverer of the New World—Abravanel, Senior and the Marranos Santangel and Sanchez who assisted Columbus—The voyage of discovery begun a day after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain—Luis de Torres and other Jews who went with Columbus—America discovered on “Hosannah Rabbah”—The Indians as the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel—Money taken from the Jews to defray the expenditure of the second voyage of Columbus—Vasco da Gama and the Jew Gaspar—Scrolls of the Torah from Portugal sold in Cochin—Alphonse d’Albuquerque’s interpreter who returned to Judaism.

In the days when Church and State were one and indissoluble, and when all large national enterprises, such as wars or the search for new dominions by means of discovery, were undertaken avowedly in the name and for the glory of the Catholic religion, it could not have been

expected that governments will make an effort to protect international trade as long as it was in Jewish hands. We must therefore go as far back as to the first half of the 14th century to find a record of Jews who went to sea on their own account in an independent way. According to the great authority on the subject of this chapter (Dr. M. Kayserling, "Christopher Columbus and the participation of the Jews in the Spanish and Portuguese Discoveries," English translation by the late Prof. Charles Gross of Harvard University) Jaime III., the last king of Mallorca, testified in 1334 that Juceff Faquin, a Jew of Barcelona, "has navigated the whole then known world." About a century later we find again a Jew prominently identified with navigation; but in this instance he is a scientific teacher, in the employ of an energetic prince who considered navigation as a national project of the greatest moment. Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal (1394-1460), who helped his father to capture Ceuta, in North Africa, and there "obtained information from Jewish travellers concerning the south coast of Guinea and the interior of Africa", established a naval academy or school of navigation at the Villa do Iffante or Sagres, a seaport town which he caused to be built. He appointed as its director Mestre Jaime of Mallorca whose real name was Jafuda (Judah) Cresques, the son of Abraham Cresques of Palma, the capital of Mallorca. Jafuda was known as "the Map Jew," and a map which he prepared for King Juan I. of Aragon and was presented by the latter to the King of France, is preserved in the National Library of Paris.<sup>2</sup> He became the teacher of the Portuguese in the art of navigation as well as in the manufacture of nautical instruments and maps. In this work he had no superior in his day.

While this Jewish scholar helped the Portuguese to many notable achievements in their daring voyages, another one, at a later period, was almost the direct cause of their being

overtaken by the Spaniards in the race for new discoveries. For it was Joseph Vecinho, physician to King João, of Portugal, considered by the high court functionaries to be the greatest authority in nautical matters, who influenced the King to reject the plan submitted by Christopher Columbus (1446?-1506), and thereby caused the latter to leave Portugal for Spain in 1484.

Columbus came to Spain when Ferdinand and Isabella, with the aid of the newly introduced Inquisition, were despoiling the wealthy Marranos, who were burned at the stake in large numbers. The last war with the Moors had already begun.

Another and more famous Jewish scholar was to make amends for whatever suffering was caused to the great discoverer by Vecinho's fatal advice. Abraham Ben Samuel Zacuto, who was born in Salamanca, Spain, about the middle of the 15th century and died an exile in Turkey after 1510, was famous as an astronomer and mathematician, and in his capacity as one of the leading professors in the university of his native city was formerly the teacher of the above named Vecinho. He was more discerning than his pupil, and when he learned to know Columbus, soon after the latter's arrival in Spain, he encouraged him personally and also gave him his almanacs and astronomical tables, which were a great help in the voyage of discovery. Zacuto was among the first influential men in Spain to favor the plans of Columbus, and his favorable report caused Ferdinand and Isabella to take him into their service in 1487. The explorer was then ordered to proceed to Malaga, which was captured several weeks before, and there made the acquaintance of the two most prominent Jews of Spain in that time—the chief farmer of taxes, Abraham Senior, and Don Isaac Abravanel. These two men were provisioning the Spanish armies which operated against the Moors, and were in high favor at Court. Abravanel was one of the first to render financial assistance to Columbus.



Louis de Santangel and other Marranos interposed in favor of Columbus when he was about to go to France in January, 1492, because Ferdinand refused to make him Viceroy and Life-Governor of all the lands which he might discover. Santangel's pleadings with Isabella were especially effective, and when the question of funds remained the only obstacle to be overcome, he who was saved from the stake by the King's grace at the time when several other members of the Santangel family perished, advanced a loan of seventeen thousand florins—nearly five million maravedis—to finance the entire project. Account books in which the transfer of money from Santangel to Columbus, through the Bishop of Avila, who afterwards became the Archbishop of Granada, were recorded, are still preserved in the *Archive de India* of Seville, Spain.

"After the Spanish monarchs had expelled all the Jews from all their Kingdoms and lands in April, in the same month they commissioned me to undertake the voyage to India"—writes Christopher Columbus. This refers to the Decree of Expulsion, but the coincidence of the actual happening was still more remarkable. The expulsion took place on the second day of August, 1492, which occurred on the ninth day of the Jewish month of Ab, the day on which, according to the Jewish tradition, is the anniversary of the destruction of both the first Holy Temple of Jerusalem in the year 586 B. C. and also of the second Temple at the hands of the Romans in the year 70 C. E. The day, known as "Tishah be'Ab," was observed as a day of mourning and lamentation among the Jews of the Diaspora in all countries and is still so observed by the Orthodox everywhere to this day. Columbus sailed on his momentous voyage on the day after—the third of August. The boats which were carrying away throngs of the expatriated and despairing Jews from the country which they loved so well and in which their ancestors dwelt for more than eight centuries, sighted that little fleet of three sailing craft which was destined to open

up a new world for the oppressed of many races, where at a later age millions of Jews were to find a free home under the protection of laws which were unthought of in those times.

Neither all the names nor even the number of men who accompanied Columbus on his first voyage are known to posterity. Some authorities place the number at 120, others as low as 90. But among the names which came down to us are those of several Jews, the best known among them being Louis de Torres, who was baptized shortly before he joined Columbus. Torres knew Hebrew, Chaldaic and some Arabic, and was taken along to be employed as an interpreter between the travellers and the natives of the parts of India which Columbus expected to reach by crossing the Ocean. Others of Jewish stock whose names were preserved are: Alfonso de Calle, Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, the physician Maestro Bernal and the surgeon Marco.

Land was sighted October 12, 1492, on "Hosannah Rabbah" (the seventh day of the Jewish Feast of the Booths), and Louis de Torres, who was sent ashore with one companion to parley with the inhabitants, was thus the first white man to step on the ground of the New World. As the place proved to be not the Kingdom of the Great Khan which Columbus had set out to reach, but an island of the West Indies, with a strange hitherto unknown race of copper-colored men, it is needless to say that the linguistic attainments of the Jewish interpreter availed him very little. After he managed to make himself somewhat understood, he was favorably impressed with the new country and finally settled for the remainder of his life in Cuba. He was the first discoverer of tobacco, which was through him introduced into the Old World. It is also believed that in describing in a Hebrew letter to a Marrano in Spain the odd gallinaceous bird which he first saw in his new abode, he gave it the name "Tukki" (the word in Kings I, 10 v. 22, which is commonly translated peacock) and that this was later

corrupted into “turkey,” by which name it is known to the English-speaking world.

It may also be remarked, in passing, that the belief identifying the red race which was surnamed Indian with the lost ten tribes of Israel, began to be entertained by many people, especially scholars and divines, soon after the discovery of America. It attained the dignity of a theory in the middle of the 17th century when Thorowgood published his work: “The Jews in America; or, Probabilities that the Americans are of that Race.” (London, 1650.) This view was supported among our own scholars by no less an authority than Manasseh Ben Israel, who wrote on the same subject in his “Esperança de Israel” which was published in Amsterdam in the same year.

Columbus wrote the first reports of his wonderful discovery to Louis de Santangel and to Gabriel Sanchez. The letter to the first is dated February 15, 1493, and was written on the return voyage, near the Azores or the Canaries.

It was decreed by a royal order of November 23, 1492, that the authorities were to confiscate for the State Treasury all property which had belonged to the Jews, including that which Christians had taken from them or had appropriated unlawfully or by violence. This gave Ferdinand sufficient means to provide for the second voyage of Columbus (March 23, 1493). The King and the Queen signed a large number of injunctions to royal officers in Soria, Zamora, Burgos and many other cities, directing them to secure immediate possession of all the precious metals, gold and silver utensils, jewels, gems and other objects of value that had been taken from the Jews who were expelled from Spain or had migrated to Portugal, and everything that these Jews had entrusted for safe keeping to Marrano, relatives or friends, and all Jewish possession which Christians had found or had unlawfully appropriated. The royal officers were later ordered to convert this property into ready

money and to give the proceeds to the treasurer, Francisco Pinelo, in Seville, to meet the expenditure of Columbus' second expedition.

One of the specific instances of these confiscations which deserves to be mentioned, is the order to Bernardino de Lerma to transfer to Pinelo all the gold, silver and various other things which Rabbi Ephraim (who is sometimes referred to in contemporary documents as Rabi Frayn, also as Rubifrayn, and who was perhaps the father of the great Rabbi Joseph Caro, author of the Shulhan Aruk, etc.), the richest Jew in Burgos, had before emigrating left with Isabel Osoria, the wife of Louis Nunez Coronel of Zamora. Not merely the clothing, ornaments and valuables which had been taken from the Jews were converted into money, but also the debts which they had been unable to recover were declared by order of the Crown to be forfeited to the state treasury, and stringent measures were adopted to collect them. A moderate estimate places the sum thus obtained at six million maravedis, to which ought to be added the two millions contributed by the Inquisition of Seville as a part of the enormous sums which it wrested from Jews and Moors. According to another order, issued in the above-named date, it was from this Jewish money that Columbus was paid the ten thousand maravedis which the Spanish monarchs had promised as a reward to him who should first sight land.<sup>3</sup>

In the days of suffering and disgrace which came to Columbus after his discoveries, Santangel and Sanchez remained faithful to him and often interceded in his behalf with Ferdinand and Isabella. They both died in 1505, about one year before the great discoverer whose success they made possible. Their immediate descendants occupied high positions in the royal service.

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Columbus was not the only renowned discoverer of that time who was directly and indirectly assisted by Jews. The great and cruel Vasco da Gama, who did for Portugal almost as much as Columbus did for Spain, could hardly have carried out his important undertakings without the help of at least two Jews. One of them was the above-mentioned Abraham Zacuto, who, like many of his unfortunate brethren, went from Spain to Portugal after the calamity of 1492. He was highly favored by King João and by his successor, Dom Manuel, and the latter consulted him on the advisability of sending out under Vasco da Gama's command the flotilla of four boats which was to reach India by the way of Cape of Good Hope. Zacuto pointed out the dangers which would have to be encountered, but gave it as his opinion that the plan was feasible and predicted that it would result in the subjection of a large part of India to the Portuguese crown. Zacuto's works and the instruments which he invented and made available materially facilitated the execution of the enterprises of Vasco da Gama and other explorers. As in the case of Columbus and Spain, da Gama sailed in the year of the expulsion of the Jews from the country which fitted out his expedition (1497). When he returned Zacuto was an exile in Tunis, though he probably could have remained in Portugal, just as Abravanel could have remained in Spain.

It was during his return voyage to Europe, while staying at the little island of Anchevide, sixty miles from Goa (off the Indian coast of Malabar) that Vasco da Gama met the second Jew who became very useful to him and to Portugal. A tall European with a long white beard approached his ship in a boat with a small crew. He had been sent by his master, Sabayo, the Moorish ruler of Goa, to negotiate with the foreign navigator. He was a Jew who, according to some chronicles, came from Posen, according to others from Granada, whose parents had emigrated to Turkey and Palestine. From Alexandria, which some give as his

birthplace, he proceeded across the Red Sea to Mecca and thence to India. Here he was a long time in captivity, and later was made admiral (*capitao mór*) by Sabayo.

The Portuguese were overjoyed “to hear so far from home a language closely related to their native speech.” But he was soon suspected of being a spy and was forced by torture to join the expedition and—as a matter of course—to embrace Christianity. The admiral acted as his godfather and his name came down to us as Gaspar da Gama or Gaspar de las Indias. He was brought to Portugal, where he was favored by King Manuel and “rendered inestimable service to Vasco da Gama and several later commanders.” He accompanied Pedro Alvarez Cobral on the expedition in 1500 which led to the independent discovery of Brazil, which became a Portuguese possession. On the return voyage Gaspar met Amerigo Vespucci, who received much information from him and mentions him as a linguist and traveller who is trustworthy and knows much about the interior of India.

On another expedition in which he accompanied his godfather in 1502, Gaspar found his wife in Cochin. She had remained true to him and to Judaism since he was carried away by the Portuguese, but probably both of them considered it unsafe for her to join him. He again journeyed to Cochin in 1505 in the retinue of the first Viceroy of India, which also included the son of Dr. Martin Pinheiro, the Judge of the Supreme Court of Lisbon. The young Pinheiro carried along a chest filled with “Torah” scrolls which were taken from the recently destroyed synagogues of Portugal. Gaspar’s wife negotiated the sale in Cochin, “where there were many Jews and synagogues,” obtaining four thousand *parados* for thirteen scrolls. The viceroy later confiscated the proceeds for the state treasury and sent an account of the whole affair to Lisbon.

Another Portuguese commander and governor of India, Alphonse d’Albuquerque, obtained much information and

valuable assistance from his interpreter, a Jew from Castille whom he induced to embrace Christianity and to assume the name Francisco d'Albuquerque. His companion Cufo or Hucefe underwent the same change of religion and visited Lisbon, but soon found himself in danger and escaped to Cairo, where he again openly professed Judaism.